



The countryside charity  
Hampshire

# A beautiful and thriving countryside for all:

Hampshire CPRE manifesto for the next government



## An era-defining election

The next government will be faced with climate breakdown, ecological collapse and a broken housing market. Tackling these problems will mean making decisions that will shape the countryside for decades to come.

To meet these challenges, we must stop pitting the needs of the countryside against the demands of our cities. We will only meet our climate targets if the planning system empowers communities to insist on the highest environmental standards for future development. We will only deliver nature's recovery if we enhance the biodiversity of the countryside surrounding our towns and cities. We will only fix the housing crisis if we ensure a genuinely affordable home and thriving life is possible in every part of the country.

CPRE, the countryside charity, calls on all political parties to recognise the value of the countryside and its essential role in answering the nation's challenges by supporting the common sense and practical policies set out below.

### 1. A planning system for people, planet and nature

The next Prime Minister will have to take decisions to overcome multiple, interlinked challenges. The cost of living, food security, energy, housing – each of critical importance.

Above all, tackling the climate and nature crises, which pose an existential threat to our countryside, will have enormous implications for land use across the nation.

We will only be able to balance these competing demands and save our countryside for future generations with a clear plan for what to put where.

That's why we need a planning system with democracy at its heart, and which prioritises outcomes that prevent climate and ecological collapse.

**To deliver a planning system that serves people, planet and nature we're calling on the next government to:**

- Develop a land use strategy which sets a positive long-term vision for land use across England. The strategy should integrate national and local policymaking and decision-taking to inform and incentivise greener land use decisions and deliver national environmental targets including net-zero.
- Ensure genuinely sustainable development by aligning national policy with the land use strategy, ensuring that key environmental targets, such as the expansion of our hedgerow network by 40% by 2050, are translated into planning policy.
- Require developers to use suitable urban brownfield sites before greenfield sites and encourage local authorities to set policies prioritising urban regeneration.
- Strengthen national planning policy to enhance meaningful community involvement and consent for new housing and energy developments.
- Require all local plans to recognise the vital role of the countryside in climate change mitigation and adaptation by including protection of the countryside for carbon sequestration, food production, health and well-being, and water retention.

## 2. Fixing the broken housing system for rural communities

**A healthy home is the foundation for a decent life.**

But over the years our broken housing system has changed a home from a human right into an investment product, depriving towns, cities and rural communities of genuinely affordable homes.

In the countryside, the situation is particularly acute and many people are now unable to afford to live in the communities that they grew up in.

**To fix the broken housing system, we are calling on the next government to:**

- Abolish hope value and amend national policy to expect much more affordable and social housing in new developments, thereby reducing the market value of land and increasing the viability of social housing provision by local authorities.
- Redefine ‘affordable housing’ so that new homes for sale or rent are directly linked to average local incomes.
- Support rural communities wishing to use neighbourhood planning or rural exception sites to deliver small-scale affordable housing developments on the edge of villages in line with locally-assessed need.
- Introduce a second home and short-term lets register, with planning controls to regulate the provision of short-term lets and powers to levy extra council tax on second homes.
- Secure higher quality housing by more forcefully advising local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate to reject schemes that do not live up to design aspirations set out in the National Design Code and those adopted locally.

## 3. Recognise the importance of our Countryside

Our county is home to two national parks: the South Downs and the New Forest. Our chalk streams are one of the rarest habitats on earth and of international importance. 38% of our county is nationally protected for the quality of its landscape.

But too often our Hampshire countryside is undervalued and sometimes seen as little more than a block on new development or infrastructure rather than somewhere important for the benefits it brings.

Away from the national parks, too little regard is paid to the value of the landscape in deciding where new development should be located. Our chalk rivers and streams and the underlying aquifers are suffering from pollution and over-extraction.

We are calling on the next Government to recognise the importance of our Hampshire Countryside to:

- Undertake to enhance our nationally protected landscapes. Safeguard their protection in the planning system and provide the necessary resources for their enrichment and contribution to tackling the climate and nature crises.
- Champion the benefits of other valued landscapes for people and wildlife. Encourage Local Authorities to identify countryside that is important for the landscape and benefits people and wildlife, and conserve it in their Local Plans as Valued Landscape or Greenbelt.
- Improve the quality of our chalk rivers and streams and the underlying aquifers. Improve the regulatory system and impose meaningful sanctions on water companies and others that breach its terms.

## 4. Rooftop renewables – a common sense revolution

To protect nature and our treasured landscapes, we have a duty to make the best possible use of our finite land.

But our outdated and expensive energy system is using up more and more of the space we need for food, wellbeing, and wildlife across our countryside.

Meanwhile, we are missing opportunities to generate huge amounts of cheap, low-carbon electricity on rooftops in every part of the country.

With the right initiatives, the rooftops of warehouses and car parks across the nation could act like clean power stations, cutting carbon emissions, slashing energy bills and protecting our countryside.

To deliver a common sense rooftop solar revolution we are calling on the next government to:

- Set a new government target for at least 60% of solar energy to be delivered through rooftop solar installations, with the aim of increasing this percentage over time.
- Make solar PV or thermal panels a standard requirement for all suitable new build housing, commercial buildings and car parks to secure planning permission.
- Work with Ofgem to accelerate investment in local grid capacity to better accommodate increased generation from rooftop solar.
- Upgrade the Smart Export Guarantee to provide higher minimum tariffs for low-income households and community-led schemes selling electricity from rooftop solar installations, thereby reducing payback periods, and improving investment viability.
- Set a sequential ‘roof first’ approach for determining ground-mounted solar applications, which prioritises use of suitable brownfield land, avoids land used by active, viable and sustainable farm businesses, and makes greenfield solar permissions more exceptional and time-limited.

### About us

CPRE is the countryside charity that campaigns to promote, enhance and protect the countryside for everyone’s benefit, wherever they live.

With a local CPRE in every county, we work with communities, businesses and government, nationally and locally, to find positive and lasting ways to help the countryside thrive – today and for generations to come. If you would like to find out more about CPRE’s parliamentary work, or arrange a meeting, please contact our external affairs team on [ExternalAffairs@cpre.org.uk](mailto:ExternalAffairs@cpre.org.uk).

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